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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

PRS-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 ARAE-00

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O 121402Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9073

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1949

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, UY
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE RENEWAL GOVERNMENTAL TENSIONS

1. THE RECENT GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS MAY BE FLARINGSUP AGAIN THROUGH RENEWAL CIVILIAN-MILITARY LENSIONS RELATED TO THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND GOVERNMENTAL PERSONALITIES. AS IN THE LAST CRISIS, THE EMBASSY MAY BY THE OBJECT OF RUMORS AND DISTORTIONS OF FACT.

2. THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS THIS TIME ARE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HECTOR ALBURQUERQUE AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THAT MINISTRY, COL. JOSE FONS. IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT THE TWO HAVE BEEN AT LOGGERHEADS EVER SINCE ALBURQUERQUE WAS APPOINTED MINISTER. FONS IS A RABID ANTI-COMMUNIST AND HE HAS OFTEN CALLED ALBURQUERQUE A "TACIT COMMUNIST." THE FIGHT HAS NOW COME TO A HEAD. THE DETAILS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

3. ON THE MORNING OF JUNE 9, ALBURQUERQUE CALLED THE ACTING AID REPRESENTATIVE, STEPHENS, TO SAY THAT HE HAD HEARD THAT SOME TIME LAST WEEK THERE WAS A PARTY WHERE FONS SAID IN THE PRESENCE OF BOTH URUGUAYANS AND FOREIGN DIPLOMATS THAT HE (ALBURQUERQUE) WAS A MARXIST. IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE KNEW IT WAS EITHER A US SPONSORED RECEPTION OR THAT US PERSONNEL WERE PRESENT. ALBURQUERQUE ASKED IF STEPHENS COULD GIVE HIM THE DATE AND PLACE OF THE PARTY.
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4. STEPHENS SAID HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT SUCH A PARTY BUT WOULD CHECK. AFTER CONSULTATION WITHIN THE EMBASSY, STEPHENS DETERMINED THAT THE PARTY IN QUESTION ZJS AN OFFICIAL FUNCTION HELD JUNE 6 AT THE HOME OF ECOM CHIEF WATKINS IN ORDER TO INTRODUCE A NEW ECONOMIC OFFICER. WE DETERMINED THAT STEPHENS WOULD ADVISE ALBURQUERQUE OF THE DATE AND PLACE OF THE FUNCTION BUT WOULD NOT COMMENT ON NATURE OF SUBSTANCE OF USUALLY "DISJOINTED" COCKTAIL PARTY CONVERSATION. THIS WAS DONE AT 5/30 PM AND ALBURQUERQUE DID NOT PRESS FOR ANY DETAILS EXCEPT DATE AND PLACE OF THE PARTY.

5. ON JUNE 7 ANOTHER OFFICIAL FUNCTION WAS HELD AT THE HOME OF THE AID REPRESENTATIVE HORWITZ. MINISTER ALBURQUERQUE ATTENDED, BUT WE ARE UNAWARE THAT HE BROUGHT THIS MATTER UP WITH MR. HORWITZ OR ANYONE ELSE.

6. ON JUNE 11, COL. FONS CAME TO THE EMBASSY AND ASKED TO SPEAK WITH ARMY ATTACHE AS WELL AS WITH AID REPRESENTATIVE HORWITZ. HE WAS TOLD HORWITZ WAS OUT OF THE COUNTRY. FONS THEN SHOWED ARMY ATTACHE A LETTER HE HAD RECEIVED FROM ARMY CINC VADORA WHICH SAID FONS HAD MADE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ALBURQUERQUE IN FRONT OF FOREIGN DIPLOMATS. FONS HAD BEEN TOLD THAT PRESIDENT BORDABERRY HAD MET WITH CINCS ON THIS ISSUE AND WAS ADAMANT IN DEMANDING FONS DISMISSAL. FONS HAS 48 HOURS TO REPLY TO THE GENERAL GIVING HIS VERSION OF THE FACTS. FONS DENIED CALLING ALBURQUERQUE A COMMUNIST, BUT SAID HE WOULD DO SO IF ASKED. FONS THOUGHT HE WOULD LOSARHIS JOB AND RECEIVE SUMMARY MILITARY PUN KHMENT, BUT ALSO THAT ALBURNNQUERQUE HAD PRESENTED AN "IRREVOCABLE" RESIGNATION. FONS THOUGHT ERRONEOUSLY, THE THE AMBASSADOR HAD REPORTED TO INCIDENT TO ALBURQARQUE. IN FACT, THE AMBASSADOR WAS NOT AT THE PARTY AND HAD INSTRUCTED STEPHENS NOT TO MAKE ANY COMMENT AS TO SUBSTANCE OF CONVERSATIO, BELIEVING THIS COULD ONLY FUEL THE FIRE.

7. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY, OF COURSE, HAS NOT COMMENTED ON THE CONTENTS OF ANY CONVERSATION COL. FONS MAY HAVE HAD WITH OFFICERS OF THIS MISSION. NEVERTHELESS, IT APPEARS TPQTHXE MAY BE DRAWN INTO THIS CLEARLY SENSITIVE AND DEVISIVE INTERNAL ISSUE. MUCH OF THIS IS THE RESULT OF FONS' WELL-KNOWN PENCHANT FOR CRITICIZING THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE WITHOUT ANY DISCRETION. OTHER URUGUAYANS PRESENT, INCLUDDING GOU OFFICIALS, UNDOUBTEDLY INFORMED ALBURQUERQUE.
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8. ACTION REQUESTED: MR. HORWITZ IS REQUESTED TO IMMEDIATELY CABLE A MEMCON ON HIS CONVERSATION WITH FONS JUNE 6 AND ON ANY SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH FONS JUNE 6 ESPECIALLY WITH ALBURQUERQUE.

9. GDS.
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